

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claims 1-18. (*Canceled*)

Claim 19. (*Currently Amended*) An inner tightening mechanism adapted to equip an article of footwear having a flexible or semi-rigid upper mounted on a sole, said tightening mechanism comprising:

a single retention band connected to the inner surface of the upper between ~~by at least~~ two anchoring points fixed on lateral and medial sides, respectively, of the upper, ~~at least a portion of~~ said single retention band adapted to partially surround a foot of a wearer of the article of footwear in a flexion fold area and extending from said flexion fold area in a direction, along a length of said retention band, to an area adapted to receive a heel of the foot.

Claim 20. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is positioned substantially above the sole.

Claim 21. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 20, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is positioned substantially on a central portion of a line connecting a base of the heel to the flexion fold of the foot.

Claim 22. (*Currently Amended*) An inner tightening mechanism ~~according to claim 19,~~  
~~wherein adapted to equip an article of footwear having a flexible or semi-rigid upper mounted~~  
~~on a sole, said tightening mechanism comprising:~~

a retention band connected to the inner surface of the upper by at least two  
anchoring points fixed on lateral and medial sides, respectively, of the upper, at least a portion  
of said retention band adapted to partially surround a foot of a wearer of the article of footwear  
in a flexion fold area and extending from said flexion fold area in a direction, along a length of  
said retention band, to an area adapted to receive a heel of the foot;

one of said anchoring points ~~including~~ ~~includes~~ a sliding ~~return~~; return; and

the retention ~~band being~~ band, ~~which is~~ fixed at an end to a second of said  
anchoring points, the retention band passing ~~passes~~ in the sliding return by defining a portion  
which covers the foot.

Claim 23. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19,  
wherein the retention band includes a fork comprising two arms, one of said arms integrating  
one of said anchoring points, and a second of said arms is fixed on an inner surface of the upper  
by a complementary anchoring point that is positioned on the same side of the upper as the first  
anchoring point.

Claim 24. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19,  
wherein a second portion of the retention band, which is comprised between a sliding return and  
an end of the retention band, includes a fastening arrangement capable of maintaining tension  
in the tightening mechanism.

Claim 25. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein the article of footwear is equipped with an inner shoe having an upper, said attachment mechanism constitutes a first attachment mechanism, and an upper of the inner shoe includes a second attachment mechanism that is complementary to the first attachment mechanism.

Claim 26. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the portion of the retention band includes an attachment mechanism means that is complementary to the previously cited attachment mechanism.

Claim 27. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein the inner surface of the upper includes a fastening arrangement that is complementary to the fastening arrangement of the second portion of the retention band.

Claim 28. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein said fastening arrangement is a self-gripping type.

Claim 29. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a

portion which covers the foot, and wherein the retention band includes a gripping arrangement that is arranged on said portion and which enables the loosening of the inner tightening mechanism.

Claim 30. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein the article of footwear is equipped with an inner shoe which includes at least two raised elements that are fixed on the lateral side and on the medial side, respectively, of the inner shoe, and wherein the retention band is supported on the raising elements.

Claim 31. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the retention band includes at least one distribution plate fixed in the area of the portion, beneath the retention band.

Claim 32. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 23, wherein one of the arms is positioned substantially along a primary direction that passes by the base of the heel and by the flexion fold, and wherein another of the arms also passes by the flexion fold but along a secondary direction that is less inclined than the primary direction.

Claim 33. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 32, wherein the arms are fixed to the upper on the medial side of the article of footwear.

Claim 34. *(Previously Presented)* An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 22, wherein the anchoring point which includes the sliding return is positioned on the medial side of the article of footwear.

Claim 35. *(Previously Presented)* An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 22, wherein the upper includes a housing on the inner surface, in an area where the sliding return is located.

Claim 36. *(Currently Amended)* An article of footwear comprising:

a sole;

an upper mounted on said sole, said upper having a lateral side, a medial side, and an inner surface, said upper being flexible or semi-rigid;

an inner tightening mechanism for retention of a foot in position within said article of footwear, said inner tightening mechanism comprising:

a retention band fixed with respect to said inner surface of said upper at at least two anchoring points, a first of said anchoring points being on said lateral side of said upper and a second of said anchoring points being on said medial side of said upper, at least a portion of said retention band at least adapted to partially surround a foot of a wearer of the boot in a flexion fold area and extending in a direction, along a length of said retention band, to an area adapted to receive a heel of the foot.

Claim 37. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, further comprising an inner shoe, said inner shoe including at least two raised elements, a first of said raised elements being fixed on a lateral side of said inner shoe and a second of said raised elements being fixed on a medial side of said inner shoe, said retention band taking support on said raised elements.

Claim 38. (*Canceled*)

Claim 39. (*Currently Amended*) An article of footwear ~~according to claim 36, wherein~~ comprising:

a sole;

an upper mounted on said sole, said upper having a lateral side, a medial side, and an inner surface, said upper being is non-rigid;

an inner tightening mechanism for retention of a foot in position within said article of footwear, said inner tightening mechanism comprising:

a retention band fixed with respect to said inner surface of said upper at at least two anchoring points, a first of said anchoring points being on said lateral side of said upper and a second of said anchoring points being on said medial side of said upper, at least a portion of said retention band at least adapted to partially surround a foot of a wearer of the boot in a flexion fold area and extending in a direction, along a length of said retention band, to an area adapted to receive a heel of the foot.

Claim 40. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein each of said lateral and medial sides of said upper includes a respective portion having a tensioned position and a non-tensioned position, said tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper being inward toward the foot of the wearer relative to said non-tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper.

Claim 41. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said inner tightening mechanism further comprises a sliding return, wherein said retention band further comprises an end and a second portion, said second portion of said retention band extending between said sliding return and said end of said retention band, said inner tightening mechanism further comprising a fixing device carried by said second portion of said retention band for maintaining tensioning in said inner tightening mechanism.

Claim 42. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein said article of footwear further comprises an inner shoe having an upper, wherein said fixing device carried by said second portion of said retention band constitutes a first fixing device, and wherein said upper of said inner shoe includes a second fixing device complementary to said first fixing device.

Claim 43. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at

an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the portion of the retention band includes an attachment mechanism means that is complementary to the previously cited attachment mechanism.

Claim 44. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein the inner surface of the upper includes a fixing device that is complementary to the fixing device of the second portion of the retention band.

Claim 45. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein said fixing device is a self-gripping type.

Claim 46. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is spaced above said sole.

Claim 47. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein both of said two anchoring points are spaced above said sole.

Claim 48. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 43, wherein at least one of said two anchoring points is positioned substantially along a central portion of a line connecting a base of the heel of the wearer to the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer.



Claim 49. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein one of said two anchoring points includes a sliding return, and wherein said retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in said sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot of the wearer.

Claim 50. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 49, wherein said one of said two anchoring points which includes said sliding return is positioned on said medial side of said upper.

Claim 51. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 49, wherein said upper includes a housing on said inner surface, in an area where said sliding return is located.

Claim 52. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said retention band includes a fork comprising two arms, one of said arms integrating one of said anchoring points, and wherein a second of said arms is fixed on an inner surface of said upper by a complementary anchoring point positioned on the same side of the upper as said first anchoring point.

Claim 53. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 52, wherein one of said arms of said fork is positioned substantially along a primary direction passing

through a base of the heel and through the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer, and wherein another of said arms also passes through the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer but along a secondary direction, said secondary direction being inclined along a horizontal plane less than said primary direction.

Claim 54. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 53, wherein said arms of said fork are fixed to said medial side of said upper.

Claim 55. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein one of said two anchoring points includes a sliding return, wherein said retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in said sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot of the wearer, and wherein said retention band includes a gripping device arranged on said portion of said retention band, said gripping device enabling loosening of said inner tightening mechanism.

Claim 56. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein one of said two anchoring points includes a sliding return, wherein said retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in said sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot of the wearer, and wherein said inner tightening mechanism further includes at least one distribution plate fixed in an area of said portion of said retention band, beneath said portion of said retention band.

Claim 57. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear comprising:

a sole;

an upper mounted on said sole, said upper having an inner surface and two sides, said two sides being constituted by a lateral side and a medial side;

a tightening mechanism for retention of a foot of a wearer in position within said article of footwear by means of said tightening mechanism applying at least a downwardly directed force upon the foot toward said sole and sidewardly directed forces upon the foot at said lateral and medial sides of said upper, said tightening mechanism comprising:

a retention band including a portion fixed with respect to said inner surface of said upper at an anchoring point at one of said two sides of said upper, said portion of said retention band extending from said anchoring point, across a top of the foot of a wearer, to a second of said two sides of said upper, said portion of said retention band being positioned along a plane extending substantially through a flexion fold area of the foot of a wearer, through said anchoring point, and through an area adapted to receive a heel of the foot of a wearer, said upper having a flexibility whereby, upon tightening of the foot within the upper, said two sides of said upper are inwardly deformed.

Claim 58. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 57, further comprising an inner boot positioned beneath said upper and beneath said tightening mechanism.

Claim 59. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 57, wherein said upper is flexible.

Claim 60. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 57, wherein each of said lateral and medial sides of said upper includes a respective portion having a tensioned position and a non-tensioned position, said tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper being inward toward the foot of the wearer relative to said non-tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper.

Claim 61. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 57, wherein said tightening mechanism further comprises a sliding return, said sliding return fixed to said inner surface of said upper at a second of said two sides of said upper at a second anchoring point, and wherein said retention band passes in said sliding return and extends upwardly from said sliding return to thereby provide access to said retention band to have said downwardly and sidewardly directed forces applied.

Claim 62. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 61, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is spaced above said sole.

Claim 63. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 61, wherein both of said anchoring points are spaced above said sole.

Claim 64. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 61, wherein both of said anchoring points are positioned substantially at a center of a line connecting a base of the heel of the wearer to the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer.

Claim 65. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein said portion of said retention band is adapted to extend over a foot of a wearer of the boot in said flexion fold area.

Claim 66. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein said upper is sufficiently flexible so that, upon tightening of the foot within the upper, said two sides of said upper are inwardly deformed.

Claim 67. (*Previously Presented*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein said retention band extends from one of said two anchoring points upwardly to a fastening arrangement to be removably affixed to an area of said upper forward of an area of said upper adapted to receive a lower leg of the wearer.

Claim 68. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said portion of said retention band is adapted to extend over a foot of a wearer of the boot in said flexion fold area.

Claim 69. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said upper is sufficiently flexible so that, upon tightening of the foot within the upper, said two sides of said upper are inwardly deformed.

Claim 70. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said retention band further extends from said second of said anchoring points upwardly to a fastening arrangement to be removably affixed to an area of said upper forward of an area of said upper adapted to receive a lower leg of the wearer.

Claim 71. (*Previously Presented*) An article of footwear according to claim 57, wherein said retention band further extends from said second of said two sides of said upper upwardly to a fastening arrangement to be removably affixed to an area of said upper forward of an area of said upper adapted to receive a lower leg of the wearer.

Claim 72. (*New*) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 22, wherein said retention band is a single retention band connected to the inner surface of the upper between the two anchoring points fixed on the lateral and medial sides, respectively, of the upper.

Claim 73. (*New*) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said retention band is a single retention band connected to and extending between said inner surface of said upper at said two anchoring points.